



United States Department of the Interior

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MOUNTAIN LION RESEARCH IN THE MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Rocky Boy's Reservation, Fort Belknap Reservation, the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and the World Wildlife Fund, is helping conduct a research project to better understand mountain lion ecology on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) and surrounding areas. Capture efforts to place GPS radio collars on mountain lions in the Missouri River Breaks began in early January.

The collars will record a lion's location every 5 hours, and via a timed release mechanism, the collar will drop off in one year. Researchers will then retrieve the collars, download the data and use the information to help characterize movements within and possible dispersal between the Missouri River Breaks, Bears Paw and Little Rocky Mountains and surrounding areas. The data will also be used to describe habitat use and selection patterns and support a statewide FWP population estimation project using resource selection functions.

With all of the snow this year, researchers have been using snowmobiles to find mountain lion tracks on which trained hounds are then used to chase and tree lions. Once treed, researchers chemically immobilize the animal, lower it out of the tree with ropes and fit the collar. The immobilizing agents are reversed, the cat recovers and soon continues on its way.

The public is reminded that use of snowmobiles is not permitted on CMR, except on the ice surface of Fort Peck Reservoir. FWS staff and cooperating researchers are administratively permitted to use snowmobiles on CMR, but only specifically to conduct this research project.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for its scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on the Service's work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.